

# ARIAH PARK PEPPERCORN TREES



Coolamon Street c1916

Following the opening of the railway siding on Travelling Stock Route 11052, adjacent to Sam Harrison's new "Ariah Park Hotel", the village of "Ariah Park" was surveyed within the boundaries of the TSR. A three chain (60m) wide corridor was preserved for travelling stock along its eastern boundary.

Within this survey, Ariah Street, running parallel to the railway line, was envisaged as the new town's commercial centre and shops opened along it as soon as land became available for purchase. It was not long, however, before it became clear that more of the "passing trade" was associated with the stock route than the railway line and business quickly gravitated toward the developing "Coolamon Street". A prompt subdivision of land on the eastern side of the new "street" assured its future.



Provision of shade in the wide avenue of Coolamon Street became an early topic of discussion between the Shire Council and the residents of Ariah Park. In its letter to the Council in July 1911, the Ariah Park Progress Association stressed that it did not favour the system of a wide street with trees planted in the centre. The Shire President, Cr. Charles Hawkins, however, took the opposite view, citing developments at Dubbo and Coolamon, taking into consideration the fact that the street was too wide to maintain in good order and pointing out that the planting of the trees up the centre would minimise the expense of maintenance and would also divide the traffic.

At a subsequent Progress Association meeting held on 30th September 1912, "Mr. Les Craig produced plans of tree planting in the streets and the plan with trees up the centre of the road was decided upon."

The Council resolved, in April 1916, to write to the Botanical Gardens to source trees for Coolamon St. and twelve months later received a plea from residents to proceed with fencing of the centre of Coolamon Street as soon as possible, to allow planting of the peppercorns in that autumn. The season slipped away and in Spring the local F & S repeated its request, finally meeting with success. The trees were planted in late September or early October 1917 by Walter McPhee, the locally based Narraburra Shire employee.



Walter McPhee



The avenue of trees was initially enclosed with fencing to protect the young trees, but by 1923 concerns were being raised that the avenue had become overgrown and neglected and was accumulating rubbish. In June 1924 Council resolved to remove the fence and protect the cenotaph with a concrete wall. It also decided to erect "10 miles per hour" speed limit signs for motor traffic on either side of the avenue, before receiving advice from the police that these were not legal. The police did, however, urge removal of the fences in the interest of public safety. They were removed in June 1925.

Compiled by Ariah Park Community Projects Committee in 2017 to celebrate 100 years for the avenue

